

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PA
SUBJECT: TRADE UNION FEDERATION TRIES FLEXING ITS WINGS

1. ON LABOR DAY, MAY 1, THE PARAGUAYAN CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (CPT) ISSUED A MANIFESTO ANNOUNCING THE FORMATION OF A LABOR DEFENSE COMMITTEE TO DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF LABOR IN FIVE KEY AREAS. THIS PUBLIC DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE SURPRISED THOSE WHO HAD RIGHTLY CONSIDERED THE CPT A DOCILE TOOL OF THE GOVERNMENT. ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY 1978 CHANGED THE OLD CPT LEADERSHIP, WHICH WAS COMPLETELY SUBSERVIENT TO THE MINISTER OF LABOR, TO A GROUP WHICH CLAIMED IT WOULD STRIKE OUT FOR GREATER INDEPENDENCE. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THE CPT'S DETERMINATION TO STRIVE FOR MORE INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. IT HAS ALSO BEEN REINFORCED BY INTERNATIONAL LABOR'S CLOUT WHICH WAS DEMONSTRATED IN THE CASE OF THE 19 CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND RURAL ACTIVISTS ARRESTED IN DECEMBER 1977, WITHOUT CAUSE, AND LATER RELEASED IN FEBRUARY 1978.

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PAGE 02 ASUNCI 01896 101207Z

2. THE AREAS WITH WHICH THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE WILL CONCERN ITSELF ARE: (1) TO PROMOTE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND TO MONITOR AGREEMENTS SO THAT MANAGEMENT LIVES UP TO THEM. (2) TO ENSURE THAT THE LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR A MINIMUM WAGE ARE COMPLIED WITH; (3) TO WATCH THAT PROVISIONS FOR PREMIUM PAY FOR OVERTIME AND HOLIDAY WORK ARE COMPLIED WITH; (4) TO DEMAND THAT FIRMS INSURE

THEIR EMPLOYEES WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY AND HEALTH BENEFIT SYSTEM AND THAT MANAGEMENT CONTRIBUTIONS ARE PAID; (5) TO ACT AS A WATCHDOG OVER LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY INSPECTORS (THE INSPECTORS ARE NOTORIOUS FOR BEING IN THE PAY OF MANAGEMENT). COMPLAINTS BY INDIVIDUAL WORKERS REGARDING THESE RIGHTS WILL BE TAKEN UP BY THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL WHO NORMALLY WOULD HAVE NO CHANCE OF OBTAINING JUSTICE ON HIS OWN.

3. THE MANIFESTO WAS ISSUED WITHOUT THE PRIOR CLEARANCE OF THE LABOR MINISTER, AN UNTHINKABLE ACTION SIX MONTHS AGO. THE CPT IS UNSURE HOW FAR IT CAN GO IN CARRYING OUT THESE ACTIVITIES. THE CPT WILL BE CHALLENGED IF THE PROGRAM IS PURSUED VIGOROUSLY. MOST BUSINESSMEN HAVE FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES AND MANY HIGH OFFICIALS AND MILITARY OFFICERS ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN BUSINESS. THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO IGNORING OR BUYING THEIR WAY AROUND THEIR LABOR AGREEMENTS. THE MANIFESTO, HOWEVER, IS AN ENCOURAGING, IF MODEST, BEGINNING BECAUSE IT COMES FROM WITHIN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND INDICATES THAT THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING, EVEN WITHIN SOME COLORADO PARTY CIRCLES. WE GIVE TOP MARKS TO AIFLD AND ITS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE, GUS TORRES LAZO, FOR SKILLFULLY PROMOTING THIS SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE CPT'S NEW DETERMINATION TO DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF LABOR IN PARAGUAY.
WHITE

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